

BRING YOUR CHILDREN TO CHRIST

10 ¹³And they were bringing little children to him, so that he might touch them; but the disciples rebuked them. ¹⁴But when Jesus saw this, he was moved with indignation and said to them, *Allow the little children to come to me; and do not forbid them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these.* ¹⁵I tell you the truth, *Anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it.* ¹⁶Then he took [the children] in his arms, laid his hands on them and blessed them. (Mk. 10:13-16)

Introduction

A young mother one day made a strange request. Down the street from her home she had observed a workman pouring a new cement sidewalk. As he was smoothing out the fresh cement, she approached him with her two-year old son in hand. She requested permission from the workman to impress the little boy's footprints into the soft cement. When the workman granted her request, she stood her little boy on the wet cement, pointing his feet in the direction of the church located on the corner across the street. She wanted to make a permanent impression that would influence the future direction of her little son's life. (*Our Daily Bread*, 3/31/92) It was an effort on her part to point her son to Christ.

In the passage of Scripture presently before us, we find the Hebrew parents bringing their little children to Christ. Jesus commends their effort, welcoming the little ones with the words, *"Allow the little children to come to me, and do not forbid them."* Because it is our Lord's desire to bless them with His salvation, let us make it a top priority to bring our children to Christ.

I. Bring Your Children to Christ, Because It Is Their Covenant Right (Mk. 10:14,16)

The Word of God teaches that the children of believing parents are distinguished from the world; the Apostle Paul informs the Corinthian church of this when he writes,

... the unbelieving husband has been sanctified through his wife, and the unbelieving wife has been sanctified through her believing husband. Otherwise your children would be unclean, but as it is, they are holy. (1 Cor. 7:14.)

Scripture teaches that the unbelieving spouse (in the case of a mixed marriage involving a believer and an unbeliever) has been "sanctified" by the believing spouse. This does not mean that the unbelieving spouse is saved by virtue of the faith of the believing spouse, as Paul points out in 1 Corinthians 7:16, *"How do you know, wife, whether you will save your husband? Or, how do you know, husband, whether you will save your wife?"* Rather, it means that within the marital relationship, the spiritual and moral defilement before God that characterizes the unbelieving spouse is nullified by virtue of the believer's relationship to Christ.

The spiritual principle operative here appears to be that expressed by our Lord in Matthew 23:17-19; namely, that someone or something is sanctified when it comes into contact with that which is holy:

You blind fools! Which is greater: the gold, or the temple that makes the gold sacred [or, that sanctifies the gold]? ¹⁸You also say, 'If anyone swears by the altar, it means nothing; but if anyone swears by the gift on it, he is bound by his oath.' ¹⁹You blind men! Which is greater: the gift, or the altar that makes the gift sacred [or, that sanctifies the gift]? (Matt. 23:17-19)

The implication of this truth as it pertains to the children is as follows. By virtue of the believing spouse's relationship to Christ and the sanctifying power of that relationship, "*your children are now holy*" (i.e.; set apart for God.) If it were not for the believing parent's relationship with Christ and the sanctifying power of that relationship, the children would still be "*unclean.*" In other words, their original sinful nature would be fully exposed before God without the divine covering of Christ's atonement and, consequently, they would be subject to just condemnation. They would be in the same category as the rest of sinful mankind: "*Indeed, we all formerly lived among them for the lusts of our sinful nature, doing the will of the flesh and of the mind, and we were by nature children of wrath just like the rest [of mankind]*" (Eph. 2:3.)

The Word of God teaches that the children of believing parents are included in the covenant of grace. The Old Testament evidence is to be found in the fact that male infants received the sign of the covenant, they were circumcised:

You are to undergo circumcision, and it will be the sign of the covenant between me and you. ¹²For the generations to come every male among you who is eight days old must be circumcised, including those born in your household or bought with money from a foreigner—those who are not your offspring. (Gen. 17:11-12)

Furthermore, one of the covenantal commandments has special pertinence to children: "*Honor your father and your mother, so that you may live long in the land Jehovah your God is giving you*" (Ex. 20:12.)

The New Testament evidence that children of a believing parent(s) are included in the covenant and are distinguished from the world is to be found in the fact that the promise of the covenant pertains to the children as well as the adults: "*The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off—for all whom the Lord our God will call*" (Acts 2:39.) This is also seen in the fact that the faith of the parent has saving implications for the children: "*Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved—you and your household*" (Acts 16:31.) Entire households receive the New Testament sign of the covenant:

When [Lydia] and the members of her household were baptized, she invited us to her home ... ³³At that hour of the night the jailer took them and washed their wounds; then immediately he and all his family were baptized. (Acts 16:15,33)

Then, too, the New Testament epistles, which are addressed to the saints (i.e., the people of God,) contain passages that specifically address children: (Ephesians 1:1; 6:1-3)

To the saints in Ephesus ... ¹Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. ²“Honor your father and mother”—which is the first commandment with a promise— ³“that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life in the land.” (Eph. 1:1; 6:1-3)

But the Word of God teaches that the children of believing parents need to personally believe in Christ as their Lord and Savior. Consider the exhortation of the father to his son in Proverbs 3:1,5, *“My son, do not forget my teaching, but keep my commands in your heart ... ⁵Trust in Jehovah with all your heart.”* Consider David’s counsel to his son, Solomon:

And you, my son Solomon, acknowledge the God of your father, and serve him with wholehearted devotion and with a willing mind, for Jehovah searches every heart and understands every motive behind the thoughts. If you seek him, he will be found by you; but if you forsake him, he will reject you forever. (1 Chron. 28:9)

Consider the words of our Lord Jesus recorded in Mark 10:14, *“Let the little children **come to me**;*” and compare these words with His call to discipleship as recorded in Matthew 11:28-29, *“**Come to me**, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. ²⁹Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.”*

Then consider the case of Timothy. The Apostle Paul testifies that he sees in Timothy a sincere faith in Christ, *“I have been reminded of your sincere faith, which first lived in your grandmother Lois and in your mother Eunice and, I am persuaded, now lives in you also”* (2 Tim. 1:5.) Paul goes on to indicate that Timothy’s faith in Christ Jesus has resulted from the witness of his mother and grandmother:

But as for you, continue in what you have learned and of what you have become convinced, knowing from whom you learned it, ¹⁵and that from childhood you have known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise with regard to salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. (2 Tim. 3:14-15)

The Word of God teaches that the children of believing parents have a great spiritual privilege, note again such a passage as 2 Timothy 3:14-15, referred to above. But those children also have a great spiritual responsibility, as the Lord Jesus reminds us: *“From everyone who has been given much, much will be*

demanded; and from the one who has been entrusted with much, much more will be asked” (Lk. 12:48b.)

As Christian parents we are exhorted by Scripture to bring our children to Christ, doing so because it is their covenantal right—the Lord Jesus desires for them to come to personal faith in Him and inherit the blessing of His salvation.

II. Bring Your Children to Christ, and Do Not Hinder Them (Mk. 10:13-14)

As Christian parents, we must pay attention to the instruction of Ephesians 6:4, *“fathers, do not provoke your children to anger; on the contrary, raise them in the discipline and instruction of the LORD.”* The primary responsibility for child rearing is placed upon the father. This responsibility cannot be delegated to the Sunday School or to the Christian School or to the youth director. Note: As the wife fulfills her God-given role in the marriage she becomes a model for the children: *“Wives, submit to your husbands as to the LORD”* (Eph. 5:22.)

Fathers in particular are cautioned *“not to provoke”* (or, exasperate) *your children to anger* (or, resentment.) We can provoke our children to anger by confusing them with conflicting demands, constantly changing the rules we require them to obey. We as Christian parents, especially Christian fathers, must imitate the LORD, His standard is always consistent:

Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. ¹⁸I tell you the truth, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished. (Matt. 5:17-18)

Another way in which we can provoke our children to anger is by frustrating them with inconsistent rewards and punishments: failing to provide either the promised reward for obedience or the threatened discipline for disobedience. We as Christian parents, especially Christian fathers, must imitate the LORD, He is always faithful to His word: *“God is not a man, that he should lie, nor a son of man, that he should change his mind. Does he speak and then not act? Does he promise and not fulfill?”* (Num. 23:19.)

Yet another way in which we can provoke our children to anger is by repelling them with hypocrisy. Again, as Christian parents, especially Christian fathers, must imitate the LORD, the God who does not ask us to do what He Himself does not do, or to be what He Himself is not: *“But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; ¹⁶for it is written, ‘Be holy, because I am holy’”* (1 Pet. 1:15-16.) For us who are less than perfect, there will be the need for apologizing and seeking forgiveness when we have been in the wrong with our children, to fail to do so or refuse to do so is a form of hypocrisy.

Fathers are to assume the major responsibility for *“raising,”* or, *“nurturing,”* their children. To nurture means to cultivate life to maturity. By way of illustration, you nurture a seedling to the maturity of a full-grown fruit-bearing plant. If we are to properly nurture our children, we must not foolishly ignore our child’s growth and development, always treating our son/daughter as though he or she were still a baby, even when he has become a boy or she has become a young woman. Nor may we selfishly stifle our child’s growth and development, always viewing our son as “my little boy,” and wishing to ever keep him in that state when he is supposed to mature into a godly Christian man. That which is God the Father’s goal for His children in Christ must also be our goal for our children. His desire is that *“we all ... become mature, attaining to the complete measure of the fullness of Christ ... [and that] ¹⁵we, with regard to all things ... grow up in him, the one who is the head, that is, Christ”* (Eph. 4:13,15.)

Christian fathers are to nurture their children by means of *“discipline”* and *“instruction.”* The apostle speaks of a training that involves discipline. The Lord Himself raises His children to maturity by means of such training: *“And you have forgotten that word of encouragement that addresses you as sons: My son, do not disregard the LORD’s discipline, and do not lose heart when he rebukes you, ‘because the LORD disciplines those he loves’* (Heb. 12:5-6a.) What is also required is a ministry of counseling, instruction, warning and guidance. The two, *“discipline”* and *“instruction,”* must go hand in hand, with discipline enforcing instruction and instruction explaining the reason for discipline when such is required to be administered.

We must pay careful attention to the fact that Christian fathers are called to undertake the spiritual task of nurturing our children for the Lord. We should not be interested in teaching our children to be good little boys and girls who will grow up to be well-mannered young men and women—in order to make their parents proud of them, and so that they may get along well in society, and bring honor, not dishonor, to the family name. As Christian parents we should be intensely interested in pointing our children to Christ, urging them to trust in Christ as their Savior and live their lives in devotion to Christ; such is a true life of godliness unto the glory of God. Our goal as Christian parents is not mere moralism for personal and earthly benefit; on the contrary, our goal is Christ-centered godliness for the glory of God and the eternal well-being of our children.

Let us bring our children to Christ, and let us not hinder them from coming to the Savior and living lives that are devoted to Him.

Conclusion

As Christian parents, let us take to heart the example of the Hebrew fathers and mothers described for us in Mark 10: they were bringing their children to Christ. As Christian parents, let us appreciate the intent of the young mother who set her little

son's footprints in cement facing towards the house of God: it was her effort to point her son to Christ. As Christian parents, let us make it a top priority to bring our children to Christ, and to see to it that we do nothing to hinder them from coming to the Savior.